FRENCH MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

By F. WHITEHEAD

VOLUME xxxvii, fasc. 2 (suite du XIVe Siècle), of the Histoire Littéraire de la France (Paris, Klincksieck, 1938) has appeared this year. U. T. Holmes has published a History of Old French Literature from the origins to 1300 (New York, 1937). Professor Holmes has in view a purely pedagogical purpose: he desires to guide the university student through the maze of O.F. literary problems and put before him résumés of the appropriate critical literature. His work is detailed and well-balanced and much more impartial than Voretzsch’s well-known manual, which it resembles in plan and scope.

In the ZRP, A. Curtius is bringing out a series of articles on mediaeval aesthetic theory. The first two articles have so far appeared (‘Zur Literarästhetik des Mittelalters’, lviii, 1–50, 129–232).

In the epic field, much interest attaches to J. Bédier’s two articles on the Roland (‘De l’édition princeps de la Chanson de Roland aux éditions les plus récentes’, R, lxiii, 433–69, lxiv, 145–244). Written to celebrate the centenary of the discovery of the Oxford MS. of the Roland by Fr. Michel, they contain an excellent history of the critical work done on the Oxford text down to the present day and discuss the remaining obscure and disputed readings in the light of the most recent research. The sudden death of M. Bedier in August invests these articles with a certain melancholy interest: it is appropriate that one of the last tasks of this great master of Romance studies should have been to clear up the final batch of textual problems connected with the poem he has done so much to elucidate. An edition and translation of the Roland: The Song of Roland, Text of the Oxford Manuscript and English translation by Rene Hague (London, Faber and Faber, 1937) is of interest to the bibliophile and general reader rather than to students of O.F. literature, while R. Hoppe’s Königsberg dissertation: Die romanische Geste im
Rolandslied (1937) is an attempt to press the O.F. epic into the service of current racial and political theories. A work which will be of some service to students of epic origins is the edition of the Guide du Pèlerin de Saint-Jacques de Compostelle by J. Vieillard (Mâcon, Prostat frères, 1938). This edition of the fifth book of the Liber Sancti Jacobi replaces the edition, now out of print, by Fita and Vinson. In R, lxiv, pp. 18–100, L. M. Brandin edits the version of the Destruction de Rome and Fiérebras contained in MS. B.M. Egerton 3028 and discusses the manuscript. C. La Roussarie has produced a modern adaptation of Anseïs de Carthage (Paris, Malfère, 1938).

Turning to Arthurian subjects, we must mention another article by R. S. Loomis on 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Modena Archivolt, a question of precedence', Sp, xiii, 221–36, in which the view is once more expressed, in spite of the weighty authorities ranged on the other side, that the Modena sculptures are earlier than Geoffrey's Historia. In a short article in R, lxi, pp. 383–92, the same scholar expresses the view that Baudemaguz in Chrétien's Lancelot is a composite personage resulting from the compounding together of the gods Bran and Manawydan son of Leir. A similar attempt to trace Arthurian material back to Celtic sources is manifest in M. F. Speyer's article on the 'Cemetery Incident in Chrétien and its Celtic original', RR, xxviii, 195–203. More general works are J. J. Parry's 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Paternity of Arthur', Sp, xiii, 271–2 and Sister I. Baker's thesis on the King's Household in the Arthurian Court from Geoffrey of Monmouth to Malory, Cath. Univ. Amer., Diss., Washington, D.C., 1937. J. S. P. Tatlock, in an article on Caradoc of Llancarfan, Sp, xiii, 136–52, discusses the relationship between Caradoc of Llancarfan and Geoffrey of Monmouth. E. Brugger devotes two articles to the question of the composition of the Prophecies Merlin ('Das arthurische Material in den Prophecies Merlin des Meisters Richart d'Irlande', ZFSL, lxi, 321–62, 486–501).

S. Strassberg deals with the rape of Guinevere in Chrétien's Lancelot in a Berlin dissertation (Die Entführung und Befreiung der Königin Ginevra, 1937). An important review of Frappier's work on the Mort Artu by F. Lot should be mentioned (R, liv, 111–22). Lot retracts his opinion that the Prose Lancelot is the